

DEATH HIGHLIGHTS

A total of 14,803 deaths occurred among Nebraska residents in 2009, a decrease from the 15,451 deaths that occurred in 2008. The 2009 figure translates into a crude mortality rate of 8.2 deaths per 1,000 residents and an age-adjusted mortality rate of 716.0 deaths per 100,000 residents.

The average age at death among Nebraska residents in 2009 was 75.0 years, a decrease from the previous year's figure of 75.4 years. The state's all-time record is 75.5 years, which was set in 2003. By gender, the average age at death in 2009 was 78.3 years for Nebraska women, which is a decrease from the 2008 mark of 79.1 years, and 71.5 years for Nebraska men, an increase from the 2008 mark of 71.3 years.

Nebraska's leading cause of death in 2009 was cancer, which accounted for 3,336 resident deaths. This figure represents just under one-fourth (22.5%) of all deaths that occurred among Nebraska residents in 2009. This is the first year that cancer has surpassed heart disease as the state's leading cause of death, although it first occurred among Nebraska men in 2006. This historic shift is primarily the result of a substantial decrease in heart disease mortality; in fact, 2009 marked the seventh consecutive year that the number of heart disease deaths in Nebraska fell below 4,000, and the state's heart disease mortality rate has declined by more than 25% since the beginning of the present decade. In contrast, the cancer mortality rate in Nebraska has declined only slightly in recent years, and the number of cancer deaths has remained between 3,000 and 3,500 in every year since 1984.

Cancer of the lung was the year's leading cause of cancer deaths among both Nebraska men and women, accounting for 888 deaths (504 men, 384 women). Colorectal (colon and rectum) cancer was Nebraska's second leading cause of cancer deaths overall in 2009, with 333 deaths (170 men, 163 women), followed by cancer of the pancreas, with 235 deaths (106 men, 129 women). However, breast cancer was the second leading cause of cancer deaths among Nebraska women in 2009, claiming 215 lives, and prostate cancer was the #2 cause of cancer deaths among Nebraska men, claiming 193 lives in 2009. Taken together, these five sites were responsible for more than half (55.9%) of the state's cancer deaths in 2009.

With only 58 fewer deaths than cancer, heart disease was the second leading cause of death among Nebraska residents in 2009, and was responsible for 3,278 deaths. However, among Nebraska women, heart disease remained the leading cause of death in 2009, by a count of 1,671 to 1,576 for cancer. Among people age 75 and older, heart disease was also the state's leading cause of death in 2009, by a count of 2,359 to 1,587 for cancer.

After heart disease and cancer, no other single cause of death accounted for more than 10% of Nebraska resident deaths in 2009. For the second year in a row, chronic lung disease was Nebraska's third leading cause of death, accounting for 881 deaths in 2009. Cerebrovascular disease (usually referred to as stroke), long the state's third leading cause of death, was again the state's #4 leading cause of death, and was responsible for 857 deaths in 2009.

DEATH HIGHLIGHTS (continued)

Accidents (also referred to as unintentional injuries) were Nebraska's fifth leading cause of death in 2009, claiming 681 lives. Motor vehicle accidents were once again Nebraska's leading cause of accidental deaths, accounting for 250 fatalities. Falls were the #2 cause of accidental deaths, with 190 resident fatalities in 2009. Eleven of the state's accidental deaths in 2009 were farm-related. Accidents were the leading cause of death in 2009 among Nebraska residents under the age of 45 years (excluding infants under one year of age), accounting for 245 (32.5%) of 754 deaths.

Alzheimer's Disease has now ranked among the top ten causes of death in Nebraska for over a decade, and in 2009 it was again the state's sixth leading cause of death, accounting for 571 deaths. After Alzheimer's Disease, Nebraska's top ten causes of death in 2009 included diabetes (with 444 deaths), nephritis and nephrosis (258 deaths), pneumonia (245 deaths), and essential hypertension and hypertensive renal disease (183 deaths).

A total of 145 infant deaths occurred among Nebraska residents in 2009, which translates into an infant mortality rate of 5.4 per 1,000 live births. This figure is the same as the 2008 rate, and ties the state's all-time lowest infant mortality rate, which was first recorded in 2003. The leading cause of infant deaths in Nebraska in 2009 was birth defects, which accounted for 38 deaths. Low birth weight babies accounted for 98 (67.6%) of Nebraska's infant deaths, with 73 of these children falling into the very low birth weight (<1500 grams) category. Neonates (infants less than 28 days old) accounted for the majority of Nebraska's 2009 infant deaths, with a count of 89, while post-neonates (infants between 28 days and one year of age) accounted for the remaining 56.